

HUMAN BEINGS

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SAFETY
CINEMA™
transcript

Human Beings 2 Being Human What happens before mistakes? Transcript

Human beings — being human. . .

They live their lives.

They learn. They grow. They work.

They take care of themselves. They take care of each other. They make life possible for each other.

It's all part of being human.

And as much as we are trying to do things right, part of being human is also about making mistakes.

In fact, everyone makes mistakes — an average of five mistakes each hour. And most of the time we aren't even aware that we make these mistakes. We just keep going, living our lives.

Now when we do realize that we made a mistake, the solution is: we look at the mistake, identify the mistake, correct it when we can, and make sure we prevent it from happening again.

But what happens before mistakes? What is going on before that mistake takes place?

It's simply this: FOCUS, or actually a LACK OF FOCUS.

Because you see, the brain can only focus on one thing at a time.

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As human beings, we may think that we're focusing on several things — but we're not — not really. We're just switching very fast from one thing to another.

Here's how it works.

First, the brain focuses on item number one.

Then it has to stop thinking of item number one — completely — before it can even begin to start thinking of item number two.

And then it has to stop thinking of number two and number one if it wants to even begin to think about item number three.

So that whole idea of MULTI-TASKING — never really happens. Never!

YOU CANNOT FOCUS ON TWO THINGS AT ONCE!

It's either this, or it's that.

So if you're trying to focus on all these different things, each with a different voice:

- Safe work
- Deadlines and budgets
- Emotional tension
- Mixed messages
- Conflicting goals

It's like having your own personal community meeting inside your head, only everyone is shouting at the same time.

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It's really not much fun.

So for us humans — when we switch off from one voice to another, we make mistakes.

That's why people sound funny on the telephone when they talk to you while they check their e-mail. They can't do both things and still give you their full attention.

And that's why talking on the cell phone while driving a car is not really driving at all — and not a good idea.

So as human beings, when we constantly switch our focus between several thoughts, like work and budget and deadline, the result is stress — lots of stress.

Now part of being human is dealing with stress. In fact, small amounts of stress can be good. It can help us be more alert and more creative.

When humans first walked the Earth, stress was part of saving human lives. Because in a dangerous situation which was filled with stress, a human would be flooded with hormones like adrenaline, that would pump up the body to fight or to run away.

But way back then when our bodies had evolved for stress, the stress and the danger were over — one-way or another — in just a few minutes.

But not today — our human bodies and minds were not designed for the constant stress of modern life or modern work.

So these days, the human stress switch gets stuck in the "ON" position.

And as a result, we feel exhausted, or angry, or frustrated — and without focus.

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So here's how it adds up.

Trying to focus on several things at once for long periods of time causes stress, which causes a lack of focus, which causes mistakes.

But here's the cool part. Even if mistakes are part of being human, so is the solution.

That is, as humans, we take care of each other. Check in with each other. See how we can help.

We take the time for one-on-one conversations.

So in practice, what does that look like?

Though we often think of safety in terms of a broad program, that's really only a starting point, because in the end it's about people reaching people.

It's about making safety personal — one-on-one — looking after each other.

First, for managers, it's a matter of identifying weaknesses in the organization that split the focus of workers, which can cause stress, and can ultimately cause mistakes.

Then, after managers have identified the weaknesses, they can build defenses that protect workers from those weaknesses:

- Defenses that help workers to focus on one thing at a time – not splitting their focus in several directions
- Defenses that help workers focus by minimizing workplace stress — not simply by teaching people how to deal with stress — but by reducing the conditions that create workplace stress in the first place.

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And then for all of us at work, the solution is the same: making safety personal, workers helping workers with one-on-one conversations, sharing insights as we watch out for each other.

Checking in on each other, asking:

- How are you doing?
- Is there anything you need?
- How can I help?

For all of us, it's just a matter of making safety personal — making life possible for each other.